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# A Book



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## Chapter 1 by Eve Erkens

I once walked into a library not knowing what to read. I walked by several shelves, seeing some familiar books - some I have read, some I know by heart. And so I kept walking, searching for some new book to excite me. And in a shelf full of boring looking old books, one pulled me closer. I picked it up, examined it well. And there were some tears and cuts, some stains here and there, and I could see on the bent pages that it was once soaked in water.

On it was a name I did not recognize, and the words were hand-written. But it was a novel, a hand-written novel the author must have left here. And so I pulled a chair, sat down and read. I laughed, I cried, I got mad, I felt an ache in my heart the way I haven't felt in a long while. It was tragedy and comedy, it was something that stirred something up in me.

And I remembered her. This book was quite like her. She wasn't just any book with another million copies out there. There was just one. And she didn't let anyone write her story, it was her who made it all. And she knew me, the way others couldn't. She saw me, the way others didn't. And I loved her. No, I love her.

She'd walk among others like she was just like them, even though she wasn't. There was something about her that draws people in. It wasn't something visible to the eyes. It was something that projects off of her person. She was not perfect, no, she was not. But everywhere she goes, and everyone she meets, they all wish she is still here.

She knew me just by a single glance. A twitch on my lips, an inaudible sigh, a split second that my eyes looked away. She read me the way I read that book. She read me once and she knew me by heart.

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## Chapter 2 by Eve Erkens



I first met her on a warm summer night. Nothing memorable in particular, except it was at a birthday party, just like how you meet most of your friends' friends. The only things I remember clearly were a) it was really warm outside; and b) I was already drunk when I met her. I remember the rest of the night too, though it was quite blurry..

I remember her being so pissed that she had to go out on such a warm night, and she had just finished her work. She was dragged to the party by Joy, to celebrate Eric's birthday. She was pissed about the cab ride, about the weather, and she swore mercilessly about both the cab ride and the weather. Then she was given alcohol, and all was good again in her world.

She sat down at the table with Joy, who was sitting next to me. I liked Joy, she was this cute girl who kind of makes everything in the world a little lighter, happier. Her long brown hair seemed so soft. Her smile would make my heart skip a beat. And well, insert all the cliché pretty-cute-girl-of-my-dreams descriptions of her here. She was all I every thought a girl should be like.

And then there's this girl, this boyish girl Joy wouldn't stop talking to. This girl who would gently touch Joy's hair and smile at her. This girl whom Joy would cling herself to, sober or drunk. Who the hell does she think she is? Or maybe they have a thing? I don't know. All I know is that I was so jealous of a girl for being so close to the girl I liked, while that girl I liked ignored me for the most part of the night.

I was a little bit pissed, but I decided it wasn't a big deal. Joy stood up to go talk to Eric (her brother, the birthday boy), and the girl was left alone. She took a sip from her drink, caught me staring, so she stared back, smiled then said.

"Hi, I'm Katie. I'm sorry I'm pretty bad with names, what's your name again?" She reached out her hand.

I shook her hand and said, "I'm Tony. Nice to meet you."

"Firm hand shake, I like it," she said.

"Um, thanks?" I replied, and we laughed.

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We talked about random things, from how much I liked so much to the food on the table. She was very cool, the kind of person who would make you feel safe with her there, while men would feel like they can't talk about anything without having to censor anything out for her. She was kinda a bitch, but that's what you're thinking. She was just so easy to

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be with. She was down to earth, and yet there is some mysterious air of sophistication to her. I couldn't quite figure her out. And after a long conversation about how nasty heroin is, Joy came back to the table, and my world shifted back to her again.

Joy actually sat down with her back facing me and started talking to Katie, which made me feel a bit insulted. Well, no, rejected would be a more accurate word. I saw Katie's eyes glanced at me for a second, she smiled, then said "well, I think you need a man's opinion on that. Hey, Tony! Care to butt in for a moment? I'm getting tired of defending my explanation to her."

I smiled, joined in the conversation, and after a few minutes, Katie stood up to buy cigarettes. I continued talking to Joy. Later that night, I realized Katie never went to buy cigarettes, because when she opened her purse, there were two more unopened packs in it while the pack she's holding still have about ten sticks. She looked at me, winked, and walked back to the other side of the table to talk to Eric.

Basically, when I first met her, she became my wingman. And this kind of makes me feel stupid, but I know if she was here, she'd be laughing so hard about it.

### Chapter 3 by Eve Erkens



I remember running into her one time. She was walking home from work, and I was in the area for some reason I don't remember.

She had this expression I could only describe as being pissed off of the rest of the world. I remember seeing her walking from a distance, and I saw those black hair being blew by the wind, her lips as dark as wine, her earphones plugged into her ears. She was walking slowly, not really in a hurry. But her brows were mushed together as if she was thinking of something disturbing.

I called out her name. Oh, yeah, earphones.

So I half-jogged to her. Tapped her on the shoulder. Almost instantly, she blocked my hand, it

was almost a slap. She turned around and yelled "WHAT?!" without actually seeing me yet.

And then she saw my face, and her expression changed. "Oh my God, I'm sorry, I didn't realize it was you!" she smiled drily.

I don't remember exactly what I said. Like I said, I don't even remember why I was there.

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"If you don't have anything to do, let's go grab a drink," she said as she fumbled for a cigarette in her purse. I nodded, and she took me to this place nearby. It was quiet, only a few people were there. An empty stage, spheres of lights, and on the wall painted "Memento Mori".

"Do you know what that means?" She asked me.

I shook my head. I knew I saw it somewhere before, but I couldn't quite recall.

"It means 'remember you will die,'" she said, then a smirk appeared on her face.

We stayed there drinking, talking about many things. About how she came to know Joy, about how she came to be in this city, about how I knew Eric, and about many things.

By the time it was midnight, her phone rang. She looked at the caller's name, placed her phone on the table and let out a sigh.

"Sorry, I've gotta take this," she said. I nodded as she stood up, lit another cigarette then walked away from the table.

I watched her as she talked on the phone, at first she was just standing still, staring at the floor. She was nodding every now and then. And then after a few minutes, the expression on her face shifted from indifference to pain. Her forehead wrinkled, she looked like she was about to cry, but she didn't. She bit her lip then talked. I couldn't exactly hear what she was saying, but sometimes her voice would float into my ears. It was her voice the way I never heard her let out before. She put her hand over her eyes gently, as if wiping away tiny tears that were forming before they fell, looked up, inhaled so deeply I could almost see the air around her shifting uncomfortably. Then it ended. She walked back with an expression I swear was a smile so forced.

"Sorry about that," she said.

"You alright?" I asked. She nodded, sipped from her glass.

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She caught me thinking, she tapped me on the shoulder and told me whatever it was, I should shrug it off.

She started talking to me about Joy. About how she can see that I liked Joy, which I easily confessed to. And for the rest of the night, we talked about Joy. She would glance at her phone once in a while, vibrating on the table, until eventually she just turned it off the shoved it into her purse. She'd look at me then ask more questions, as if the phone wasn't bothering her. We talked until sunrise, she gave me her number so we can hangout again, "next time, I'll bring Joy," she said.

She seemed fine after we drank. I walked her home. She smiled at me and thanked me for keeping her company. I waited until she disappeared into the lobby of her building, then started walking towards the bus stop. I was so excited about knowing more about Joy that I didn't notice much after she turned off her phone.

Maybe if I tried to pry it out of her, she'd still be here. But then again, she wasn't the kind of person who'd tell you anything unless she really wanted to.

But maybe if I didn't care much about Joy, she'd still be here.

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